DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 193 564 CG 014 725

AUTHOR Farrow, Dana L.: And Others
TITLE Relationship between Applicant Handicap and Employment Evaluations.
PUB DATE Sep 80
NOTE 14p.: Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (88th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, September 1-5, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attribution Theory: *Bias: *Employment Qualifications: *Epilepsy: *Equal Opportunities (Jobs): Expectation: Health: *Job Applicants: Job Performance: Physical Disabilities: *Reverse Discrimination: Sex Differences: Sex Stereotypes

ABSTRACT

Very little is known about discrimination against the handicapped in employment situations and the processes by which it occurs. Mature students (N=72) in personnel and behavioral science courses evaluated epileptic or non-epileptic, male or female applicants for an auto sales or receptionist position. Subjects reviewed an applicant's resume folder and rated the applicant on various scales. Subjects also attributed anticipated success or failure on the job of hired applicants to ability, effort, luck, or task difficulty. Results indicate that althoug. health is not a determining factor in hiring or entry salary, it appears to act as a reverse bias wherein the handicapped applicant is rated higher in job-related experience, training, and knowledge of occupational area. Both sex- and job-stereotyping were apparent to some extent. The female epileptic applicant had a significantly higher probability of being hired than the other three applicants, indicating possible reverse discrimination. (NRB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED193564

Relationships Between Applicant Handicap and Employment Evaluations

Dana L. Farrow
Charles R. Barnette
Ellie S. Rozos
Robin A. Genin
Bobby Ray Beard

Florida International University

CG 014725

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Dana L. Farrow

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Unfair discrimination against the handicapped is an issue which we may expect to receive increased attention in our society. The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires organizations receiving more than $2,500 annually in federal contracts to take affirmative action with regard to employment and advancement of the handicapped. Some congressmen are currently striving for a law which would outlaw all job bias (including that by non-federal contract firms) against the handicapped ("Labor's Hopes," 1979.) Recent newspaper articles have exposed allegedly unfair pay practices and poor working conditions of the employed handicapped. In many instances, the handicapped are paid far less than non-handicapped workers who do exactly the same work ("Some Workshops Pay Handicapped,"1979). Such attention may be expected to increase pressure to further reduce unfair discrimination against the nation's estimated 20 million handicapped people (Pati, 1978).

However, very little is known about handicapped discrimination and the processes by which it occurs. Krefting and Brief (1976) had senior level management students rate disabled (paraplegic) versus non-disabled candidates for a typist's position. All materials indicated the applicant was qualified for the position. Even though the overall ratings for the disabled and non-disabled applicants were the same, the disabled applicant was rated as being less healthy, having less potential for promotion, but having higher work motivation and more likely to be a long term employee. Rose and Brief (1979) found that handicapped applicants were in general evaluated no differently than "normal"applicants; however, epileptic applicants were expected to establish better relationships with clients and customers as well as with other employees than were normal applicants.

The purpose of this study was to further investigate handicapped discrimination in employment situations. The particular handicap chosen was intended to be non-job related (epilepsy, controlled by medication). Based on the abundant literature of unfair sex discrimination, and in particular how sex of the applicant may interact with other characteristics such as attractiveness (Berschied and Walster, 1974) and type of job applied for (e.g., male dominated or female dominated job-- see Cash, Gillen, & Burns, 1977), we expected handicap

effects to interact with sex of the applicant and type of job. Consequently 72 mature (mean age=28.3 years) students in personnel and behavioral science classes with considerable work experience (mean=10.2 years) evaluated epileptic or non-epileptic, male or female applicants for an autosales or receptionist position in a factorial design. To provide insight into resulting psychological processes subjects rated each applicant on 24 semantic differential scales (e.g., not persistent--persistent), and attributed anticipated success or failure of the candidate, if hired, to ability, effort, luck, and/or task difficulty.

METHOD

Subjects

Thirty-five male and 37 female upper division students in personnel and behaviorial science courses at a large southeastern public university participated in the study. Subjects were relatively mature and had considerable work experience. Biodata questions revealed (means, standard deviations in parentheses) age (28.3, 7.4), years worked (10.2, 6.2). In addition, 43 had been a supervisor or manager for more than one year, and 36 had more than one year's experience in interviewing or hiring others for employment.

Resume Materials, Instruments and Procedure

Resume folders were distributed randomly to subjects. Unknown to subjects, there were eight different folders: an (a) epileptic or "normal" (b) John or Janet Thompson, applies for an (c) auto sales worker or receptionist position. These two jobs were chosen because previous research has shown them to be appropriate for high school graduates and to be perceived approximately equal in prestige, skill and supervisory independence, but to vary on masculinity/femininity. In our job descriptions, the incumbent of each position has contact with customers. Each subject rated only one folder; 9 subjects received each experimental condition.

Folder contents were constructed to be as realistic as possible. Each contained a job description with job specifications, applicant resume (recent high school graduate, grade point average was 2.50 out of 4.00, with one year's job related experience), a physician's medical examination report

(normal condition: general health-"excellent," other-"none"; epileptic condition: general health-"excellent," other-"History of epilepsy since childhood; seizures controlled by medication."), interview summary (epileptic: "Previous job performance was not affected by applicant's medical history") and a reference summary based on a conversation with the applicant's supervisor at his/her previous job ("Medical history does not affect job performance"). Statements concerning experimental manipulations were embedded in other resume materials so as not to sensitize the subjects to the experiment's purpose; "applicants" were intended to be perceived as being only moderately qualified for the jobs to insure there being meaningful variance in the dependent variables. Instructions to subjects stated that this exercise was "intended to make you more familiar with the types of decisions a Personnel Manager makes when evaluating a job candidate for employment," listed the contents of the folder, and asked to "assume that you are the Personnel Manager. However, do not assume you are some other person. You are the Personnel Manager. Be yourself and make your own decisions to the items asked, drawing from your own practical and academic experience." Responses were made annonymously.

Subjects rated the applicants on 23 five-point scales (e.g.,"How would you rate the applicant's job-related experience and training," from very unfavorable to very favorable; "How well do you think this person would get along with customers," from very well to very poorly), two 4-point scales ("How would you rate the applicant's health," from very poor health to extremely good health; "What hiring decision would you make concerning the applicant," --would hire, probably would hire, probably would not hire, would not hire), and one 9-point scale ("How much above or below the going market rate for this job should this person's salary be if hired," from 40 percent below to 40 percent above market rate in 10 percent increments). Half of the items had reversed scales to minimize subject response tendencies.

In addition, there were two attribution questions--one asked the respondents to assume that the applicant was hired and succeeded on the job, the other asked subjects to assume that the applicant was hired and failed on the job. Subjects were then asked to rate what they considered the causes of the successful or failing performance to be by assigning a percentage figure beside each of the possible four causes: ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Percentages for each question had to sum to 100. Finally, subjects were asked to describe the job applicant on 24 seven-point adjective semantic

differential scales (e.g., dependent, independent; irresponsible, responsible) by "indicat(ing) your first impression" while working at "a fairly high rate of speed." Decision variable and attribute questions are listed in Table 1.

Each response variable was subjected to a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial analysis of variance.

RESULTS

Cell means for each of the decision variables are listed in Table 1.

Main Effects

Health. Normal applicants were rated as having better health ($\bar{x}$=3.56) than epileptic candidates ($\bar{x}$=3.03), $F(1,64)=20.1$, $p<.001$, while handicapped applicants were judged to have more favorable job-related experience and training (4.39 vs. 4.11), $F(1,64)=3.9$, $p<.05$. If the applicant were hired and failed on the job, this was attributed to be more due to effort (45% vs. 35%) $F(1,64)=4.2$, $p<.05$, and less due to task difficulty (15% vs. 26%), $F(1,64)=9.9$, $p<.01$ for the epileptic than for the normal candidate.

Sex. Male applicants were judged to be more competitive (4.56 vs. 4.11), $F(1,64)=4.3$, $p<.05$, and desiring more responsibility (4.89 vs. 4.11), $F(1,64)=8.6$, $p<.01$, than were female applicants.

Job. Different characteristics were attributed to the applicants based upon the type of job applied for. Expectations of the applicant's job performance, if hired, were more favorable for the receptionist than for the autosales job (3.94 vs. 3.72), $F(1,64)=4.9$, $p<.05$. Attributions for the causes of failure on the job were more due to luck for the autosales position than for the receptionist (22% vs. 11%), $F(1,64)=8.6$, $p<.01$. In addition, the person applying for the autosales position was perceived as being more ambitious (4.75 vs. 4.00), $F(1,64)=6.8$, $p<.01$, more responsible (5.64 vs. 5.17), $F(1,64)=4.3$, $p<.05$, more cooperative (5.78 vs. 5.22), $F(1,64)=5.0$, $p<.05$, more determined (5.11 vs. 4.56), $F(1,64)=3.7$, $p<.05$, more persistent (4.78 vs. 4.08), $F(1,64)=7.5$, $p<.01$, more self-confident (5.19 vs. 4.58), $F(1,64)=5.1$, $p<.05$, and more reliable (5.94 vs. 5.06), $F(1,64)=10.1$, $p<.01$ than the person applying for the receptionist job.

Interactions

All interactions and mean differences discussed below are significant

at the .05 level or better.

Health and Sex. Normal males if hired were expected to exert more effort on the job than normal females (3.00 vs. 2.50). Normal males were expected to perform better than epileptic males (4.00 vs. 3.67). The overall rating of the epileptic was higher than the normal female (3.72 vs. 3.21). The probability of being hired was higher for the epileptic female (3.33) and the normal male (3.28) than for the normal female (2.89). The epileptic male was rated as being less independent (4.11) than either the normal male (5.06) or the epileptic female (5.06). The normal male is viewed as being more creative (4.89) than the epileptic male (3.94). The normal male (4.89) and the epileptic female (4.61) are more ambitious than the normal female (3.83). The normal male is seen as desiring more responsibility (5.11) than the normal female (3.61). The normal male (5.24) and epileptic female (5.33) are viewed as being more poised than the epileptic male (4.83) and normal female (4.72). Lastly, the normal male (4.72) and epileptic female (4.67) are rated more persistent than the normal female (4.00).

Health and Job. Epileptic applicants for the receptionist job were judged to have a greater knowledge of the occupational area than were normal applicants for this job (4.39 vs. 3.61). Epileptic sales applicants (6.00) were judged more sensitive than normal sales applicants (5.06). Epileptic sales applicants were rated higher on responsibility (5.83), success (5.39), and self-confidence (5.61) than were epileptic receptionist applicants (4.89, 4.44, 4.22). In addition, the epileptic sales applicant was judged more determined (5.56) than the applicants in the other three conditions (4.67, 4.67, 4.44), and the epileptic receptionist applicant was rated less competent (4.78) than the other three conditions (5.28, 5.44, 5.56).

Sex and Job. The job related experience and training of the female sales applicant (4.56) was perceived as being higher than the female receptionist applicant (3.94). If the candidate were hired, the cause of success was attributed less to task difficulty for the females sales applicant (12%) than for the other three conditions (20%, 16%, 18%); the cause of failure was attributed less to effort for the male sales applicant (31%) than for the other three conditions (44%, 46%, 41%).

Health and Sex and Job. There was one significant triple interaction. The chances that the male epileptic sales applicant, if hired, " would become seriously disabled and be unable to work for extended periods of time" were

higher (2.33) than for either the female epileptic sales applicant (1.67) or the normal male sales applicant (1.67).

CONCLUSIONS

A number of the results are particularly interesting. Although neither probability of being hired nor entry salary is significantly affected by health, there appears to be a reverse bias whereby the handicapped applicant was rated higher in both job related experience and training and in knowledge of occupational area. Sex stereotyping is apparent to a minimal extent in that male applicants are judged to be more competitive and desiring more responsibility than female applicants, And there is considerable job stereotyping--sales applicants are seen to be more ambitious, responsible, determined, persistent, self-confident, and reliable than receptionist applicants.

The epileptic female applicant (for either job) has a higher probability of being hired than the normal female applicant. Examination of the semantic differential scales reveals possible reasons for this--compared to the normal female, the epileptic female is perceived as being more poised, more persistent, and more ambitious.

The epileptic sales applicants (either male or female) are seen as being more sensitive, more determined, more successful, and more self-confident than other applicants, although these attributes do not affect their chances of being hired nor their starting salaries.

Previous research based on attribution theory indicates that if a person performs in a manner consistent with prior expectations, such as a man succeeding in an in-role masculine occupation, the outcome is attributed more to the fixed factors of ability and task difficulty and less to the variable factors of effort and luck (Kelley, 1967). Conversely, when a person's performance is above or below expected performance, such as a woman succeeding in an out-of-role masculine occupation, the outcome is attributed more to the variable factors of effort and luck and less to the fixed factors of ability and task difficulty (Jones & Davis, 1965). These predictions held true here only when the female succeeded in the masculine autosales job (task difficulty mean attribution=12% vs. 20% when the male succeeded in the masculine occupation). When the male failed in the masculine occupation the mean failure attribution due to effort was 31% versus 44% for the female who failed in the sales job, 46% for the male who failed in the receptionist job, and

41% for the female who failed in the receptionist job.

Applying attribution reasoning to our health main effect attribution findings, it appears that failure of the epileptic person would be inconsistent with prior expectations (failure attribution to effort=35% for normals, 45% for epileptics; failure attribution to task difficulty=25% for normals, 15% for epileptics). Thus epileptics may be less expected to fail, at least on the autosales and receptionist jobs, than non-handicapped job applicants.

REFERENCES

Berschied, E., & Walster, E. Physical attractiveness. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in experimental social psychology (Vol. 7). New York: Academic Press, 1974.

Cash, T.F., Gillen, B., & Burns, D.S. Sexism and "beautyism" in personnel consultant decision-making. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1977, 62, 301-310.

Jones, E.E., & Davis, K.E. From acts to dispositions: The attribution process in person perception. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in experimental social psychology (Vol.2). New York: Academic Press, 1965.

Kelley, H.H. Attribution theory in social psychology. In D. Levin (Ed.), Nebraska symposium on motivation. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska, 1967.

Krefting,L.A., & Brief,A.P. The impact of applicant disability on evaluation judgements in the selection process. Academy of Management Journal, 1976, 19, 675-680.

Labor's hopes for victory now rest mainly on crumbs. Wall Street Journal, December 18, 1979, p.1.

Pati, G.C. Countdown on hiring the handicapped. Personnel Journal, 1978, 57 (3), 144-152.

Rose, G.L., & Brief, A.P. Effects of handicap and job characteristics on selection evaluations. Personnel Psychology, 1979, 32, 385-392.

Some workshops pay handicapped as little as 10 cents an hour. Wall Street Journal, October 17, 1979, p.1.

Table 1

Item Means by Health and Sex of Job Applicant And Type of Position Sought

	Non-Epileptic				Epileptic			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Sales	Recep	Sales	Recep	Sales	Recep	Sales	Recep
1. Work Record	4.00	4.00	3.89	3.56	3.78	4.11	4.11	4.00
2. Interest	3.56	4.00	3.89	3.22	4.00	3.89	4.00	4.00
3. Initiative	3.67	3.56	3.22	3.44	3.33	3.44	3.56	3.67
4. Experience	4.22	4.22	4.44	3.56	4.11	4.44	4.67	4.33
5. Tenure	3.56	3.00	3.11	2.89	3.22	3.22	3.67	3.22
6. Motivation	3.78	3.44	3.33	3.56	3.22	3.44	3.89	3.56
7. Knowledge	4.11	4.11	4.22	3.11	4.22	4.44	4.22	4.33
8. Health[1]	3.67	3.44	3.44	3.67	2.78	2.89	3.22	3.22
9. Ability	3.33	3.56	3.22	3.33	3.33	3.56	3.89	3.56
10. Absenteeism	2.89	3.78	3.00	3.22	3.00	3.00	3.44	2.89
11. Tardiness	3.56	3.89	3.78	3.33	3.33	3.67	3.56	3.78
12. Peer Relations	4.22	4.56	4.22	4.11	4.11	4.00	4.33	4.22
13. Customer Relations	4.00	4.44	4.11	4.00	3.89	4.00	4.33	4.11
14. Potential	3.11	2.89	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.67	3.44	3.11
15. Enjoy Being With	2.67	3.67	3.22	3.11	3.44	3.22	3.56	3.67
16. Disability Potential	1.67	2.00	2.00	1.78	2.33	1.89	1.67	2.00
17. Effort	3.11	2.89	2.44	2.56	2.78	2.44	3.33	2.44
18. Salary[2]	5.33	5.78	5.67	5.44	5.44	5.89	5.56	5.44
19. Qualifications	3.00	3.11	3.00	3.00	3.11	2.89	3.00	3.11
20. Performance	3.78	4.22	3.67	3.89	3.67	3.67	3.78	4.00
21. Overall Rating	3.44	3.67	3.11	3.33	3.56	3.33	3.67	3.78

Table 1 (cont'd)

	Non-Epileptic				Epileptic			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Sales	Recep	Sales	Recep	Sales	Recep	Sales	Recep
22. Hiring Decision[1]	3.11	3.44	3.00	2.78	3.22	3.11	3.44	3.22
23. Confidence In Ratings	4.22	3.44	4.11	3.56	4.00	4.11	4.00	4.11
24. Success Due to[3]								
A. Ability	40.00	38.89	42.78	41.11	34.44	42.22	32.78	41.11
B. Effort	28.89	30.56	29.22	30.00	28.89	33.89	44.44	33.33
C. Task Difficulty	17.56	18.89	14.78	17.22	23.33	13.89	8.89	18.89
D. Luck	13.56	11.67	13.22	11.67	13.89	12.22	13.89	6.67
25. Failure Due to[3]								
A. Ability	25.00	24.44	21.11	21.67	20.56	25.00	21.11	25.56
B. Effort	26 67	38.33	40.00	36.67	35.00	53.33	47.78	44.44
C. Task Difficulty	21.11	20.56	26.67	30.00	14.44	15.00	10.56	19.44
D. Luck	27.22	16.67	12.22	11.67	30.00	6.67	19.44	10.56

[1] Four-point scale

[2] Nine-point scale

[3] Percentages

Note: All items are 9-point scale unless otherwise indicated.